

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6064

As of February 25, 2009

Title: An act relating to regional transportation accountability boards.

Brief Description: Establishing transportation accountability regions and regional transportation accountability boards.

Sponsors: Senators Jarrett, Murray, Marr, Swecker, Sheldon, Haugen and Hewitt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/25/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Many local transportation entities have formed, or are eligible to be formed, within the central Puget Sound region for the purposes of planning, funding, constructing, and/or operating transportation projects and services. The degree of coordination between the entities varies throughout the region. Some of the entities include:

- cities;
- counties;
- local transit districts;
- regional transit authorities (e.g. Sound Transit);
- regional transportation investment districts (RTID); and
- regional transportation planning organizations (e.g., Puget Sound Regional Council).

The final recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation submitted December 1, 2000, included Recommendation #6: "Provide regions with the ability to plan, select, fund, and implement (or contract for implementation of) projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals." Additionally, in its final report issued on December 31, 2006, the Regional Transportation Commission included a primary recommendation stating that a single entity should be established in the central Puget Sound region "which has authority and responsibility for planning, prioritizing, and funding all modes of regional transportation...."

Summary of Bill: A Transportation Accountability Region may be established within King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties, if established by voter initiative or by the legislative

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

authority of each of the four counties. The Transportation Accountability Region is governed by a Regional Transportation Accountability Board (Board), consisting of nine part-time, directly elected nonpartisan members. Board members serve for staggered, six-year terms. The Board must establish a policy advisory council to advise the Board on transportation planning, prioritization, and funding issues.

The Board must perform the following: (1) develop a regional transportation plan for submittal to voters; (2) receive, prioritize, and disburse state transportation funds for regional transportation projects; (3) approve regional transportation projects before any revenue measure funding the projects may be sent to voters; (4) impose transportation impact fees on development activities that may significantly impact regional transportation projects; and (5) establish a program for interconnecting regional transit fares, schedules, and transfers.

Among other things, a regional transportation plan may include planning, financing, construction, and operation of regional transportation projects, as well as a plan to coordinate or consolidate under the Board the services of any transit agency located in the region. Additionally, the plan may include various taxes, fees, or tolls, the proceeds of which must be used to implement the regional transportation plan and to cover Board costs. The plan must be submitted to voters for approval.

The Board must consolidate and exercise all powers and responsibilities of the following: (1) a RTID; (2) a Regional Transportation Planning Organization; (3) a Metropolitan Planning Organization, to the extent permitted by federal law; and (4) a Regional Transit Authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There are currently too many transportation agencies operating in the central Puget Sound region, resulting in a lack of coordination. The Regional Transportation Commission in 2006 recommended a single transportation agency for the region. The current system is broken, with too many groups and fragmentation. No single finance overview exists for transportation in the Puget Sound region. All of the various transportation agencies in the region should be consolidated, with a directly elected governance board.

OTHER: WSDOT is not anti-regional governance, but has concerns with transferring state transportation dollars to a regional agency. This bill might jeopardize Sound Transit's federal grants.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Slade Gorton, former U.S. Senator; John Stanton, Doug MacDonald, citizens; Dave Overstreet, AAA Washington; Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable.

OTHER: Andrew Austin, Transportation Choices; Judy Cole, Spokane Regional Transportation Group; David Dye, WSDOT.